
From Access to Action

Impact Pathways for the IDS Knowledge Services

Anna Downie, December 2008



About the Strategic Learning Initiative

The Strategic Learning Initiative (SLI) is an IDS programme that works collaboratively with IDS Knowledge Services, their peers and partner organisations. SLI's purpose is to build understanding about the role information, especially research-based information, plays in stimulating positive social change and to help to apply that understanding in practical ways to strengthen knowledge, information and communication programmes, at IDS and across the sector.

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About this publication

This publication sets out a theory about how the IDS Knowledge Services, as information and knowledge intermediaries, see their contribution to increasing information use, and what role that information plays in development processes and social change. It was produced to guide internal strategic planning and to act as a discussion document for others in this sector. An electronic version of this publication is available as a free download from www.ids.ac.uk/go/sli
Please send any comments or questions to sli@ids.ac.uk

From Access to Action: Impact Pathways for the IDS Knowledge Services, Anna Downie

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From Access to Action

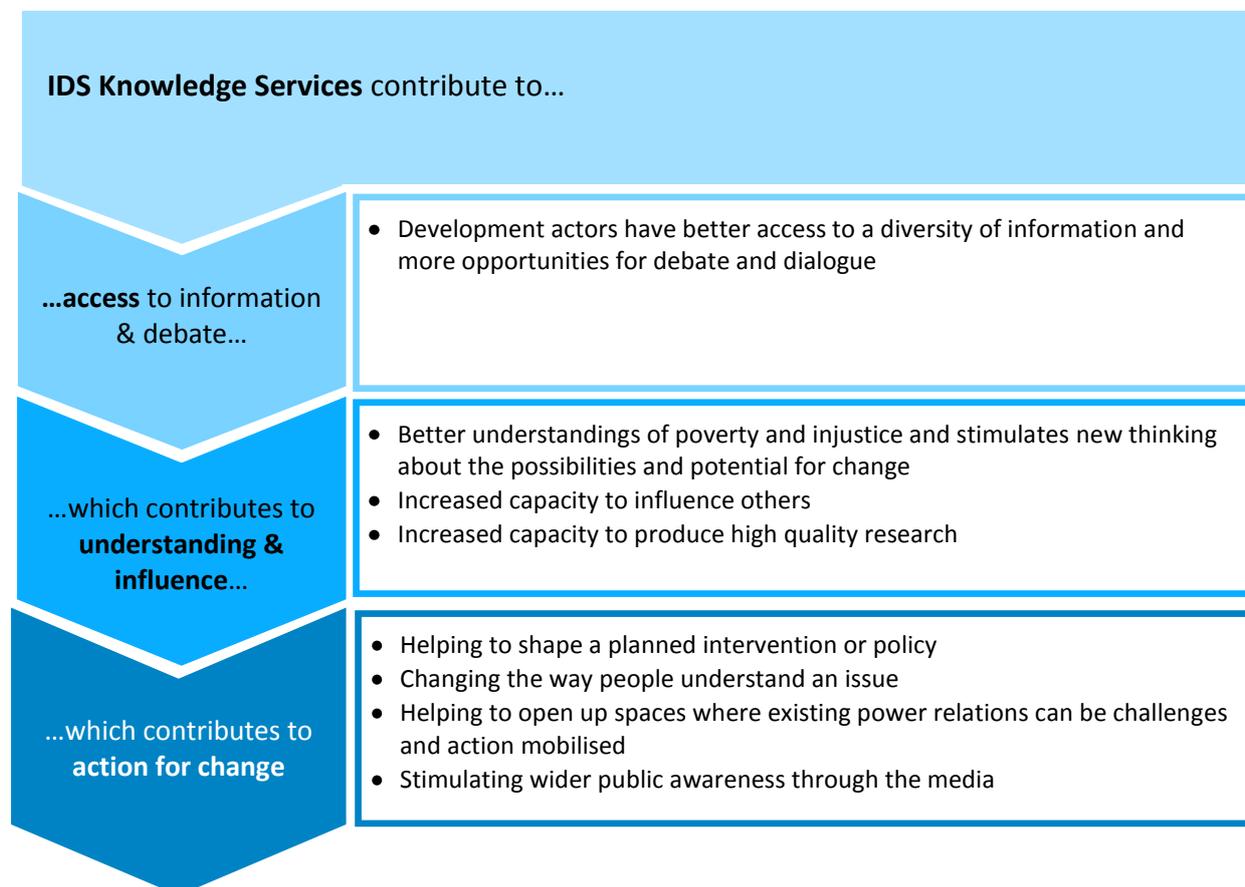
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Summary

Access to information cannot be viewed as an end in itself but as a contributor to development processes and social change. Individual stories from users of the MK4D programme have helped to develop a framework to guide our work and improve planning, evaluation, analysis and targeting of services. The resulting theory of change sets out how the programme contributes to information use in development and the model will evolve as it is tested, debated and used in planning, evaluation and research. At its most simplistic, we see our influence as having a number of layers:



As part of the wider IDS vision, the Mobilising Knowledge for Development Programme aims to support development actors to use more diverse development information that reflects multiple voices and perspectives - if this knowledge is shared and applied in projects, programmes, policy and advocacy it can contribute to more enabling development processes and interventions.

To achieve this MK4D works to increase access to relevant, credible and diverse information when it is needed. By enabling development actors to engage with each other to share information; discuss, debate and create new knowledge together, we will contribute to a better understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty and injustice - and possibilities and potential for change.

The theory of change gives us a clearer idea of where we have influence and where there are gaps. It also sets out our assumptions and the external factors which influence information flows.

It will provide the basis for our planning, indicators and evaluation plans and the analytical framework for our evaluation data. We also hope to use it as a starting point for conversations to find out what others in our sector think about the theory and practice of our work.

From access to action: Impact pathways for the IDS Knowledge Services

What are impact pathways?¹

This document sets out a theory about how the IDS Knowledge Services (IDS KS), as information and knowledge intermediaries, see their contribution to increasing information use, and what role that information plays in development processes and social change. This framework is a *description* of how we can look at the role information can play in development processes, based on our understandings of the kinds of outcomes we have seen; it is not a *prescription* for change². This document has both been influenced by, and we hope contributes to, the wider discussions ongoing at IDS in 2008 about how the Institute views influence and the different aspects of its information and communication work.

Information, specifically information from IDS KS, plays a complicated role in achieving the IDS vision of reducing poverty and social injustice. Our outcomes focus on increasing the use of information to improve the quality of development processes rather than directly expecting to attribute any changes in development outcomes to our influence. There is a temptation to attribute observed changes in development processes directly to the influence of information (or 'evidence') alone. Thus there is a risk of ascribing more importance to our information than to other factors in explaining change. We must acknowledge the complex interplay of other influences and even to serendipity when we observe change happening in a way that we desire.

We are therefore tentative in our claims and conclusions, and are working to understand how information fits into wider processes of change. We hope to be able to identify specific instances through monitoring and evaluation where we have made a contribution to development processes which will help to improve this model.

A hypothesis of how our work contributes to change

It must be underlined that this is only a model and as such is imperfect, partial and only one way of looking at a complex world. It gives us a starting point from which to build our evaluation and research plans. However there are many other ways we can build our understanding of information, communication and knowledge processes, and the role of IDS KS in them, such as social networks, complexity theory³ and an analysis of power relations⁴. Improving our understanding of how we can best research and understand this area is a key part of our strategy for the next 5 years. This framework is also our first attempt at a model, and so it will evolve as we test, debate and use it. It is therefore perhaps viewed best as one hypothesis which best fits with our current values and assumptions and pragmatically allows us to plan and evaluate how our work can contribute to wider development processes.

The **purpose** of having a theory of change which maps out expected impact pathways is for:

- Planning and evaluation
- Developing our theoretical understandings of information, communication and knowledge processes

¹ Douthwaite and Alvarez (date unknown)

² Reller (undated)

³ Ramalingam and Jones et al (2008)

⁴ Gaventa (2005)

- Providing a statement of how we view our influence to open up debate and discussion in this area

Why we developed the impact pathways

This framework was developed partly in response to a frustration with the logframes that had previously been used to guide the evaluation of the IDS Knowledge Services. The linear and four level hierarchy made understanding the role of information either far too production focused or with unrealistically high level goals (in less than four steps the logframe went from our producing websites to reducing poverty). Collection of qualitative evaluation data was left without an analytical framework and thus we had a myriad of stories, quotes and case studies but no way to bring them together to identify patterns and learn from them.

We also wanted to achieve a common framework around which the different IDS KS could plan and evaluate more jointly- logically it didn't make sense to have five service level logframes and one overarching one when so many of our expected outcomes were overlapping. An external evaluation of Eldis, and Output to Purpose Review of the Mobilising Knowledge for Development programme provided the stimulus and recommendations to develop this framework⁵. Acknowledging that logframes are not the most appropriate planning tool for these kinds of information interventions, the findings of the evaluation recommended that we develop and make explicit our theory of change, and move from having at least 6 different logframes to only one for the IDS KS.

How we developed the impact pathways

We based this framework on an understanding of some of the literature in the vast field of information science and research communications. We used the data we have from evaluation efforts over the past few years to ground our framework in reality. The strategic review undertaken by the Information Department in 2007 also provided a rich source of data and reflection on the role of IDS KS. Finally we are lucky to be part of IDS where there is considerable experience and expertise around ways of thinking about information, communication and knowledge. As we were working on the framework IDS has been running a seminar series presenting different ways in which IDS views influence. The discussions in those seminars have provided inspiration and some of the ideas which are incorporated into the framework. The framework has been developed through individual desk work and group discussions involving a number of people within IDS⁶.

Using the framework

So that it is of relevance to all of the IDS KS, the theory of change is necessarily quite generic. Our vision and goal could relate to millions of development processes taking place in the world. Individual Knowledge Services and even product plans therefore may wish to be more specific about the kinds of outcomes they are seeking in the context of the theory of change. For example in the context of a product focusing on gender and climate change, it is possible to be much more specific about our vision- gender equity would be a specific aspect of social justice that we wish to see. Equally at the 'Actions' level, when relating to a particular product we could be more specific about the kinds of development interventions and processes we are seeking to influence. The more specific we can be about these kinds of outcomes and the target groups involved, the more effective our services are

⁵ "Elaborating a theory of change requires consideration of how information gets translated to policy actions (causality) and who is involved... The Information Department is one part of a complex process, over which it has little control. Nonetheless, it should be able to state what it thinks the process(es) is/are and where its role can have an influence." Barr and Haylor (2008)

⁶ This framework was developed by Anna Downie, with inputs from Alex Mason, Catherine Gould, Catherine Fisher, Freida McCormack, Matt Jones, Peter Taylor, Nick Perkins, Melissa Leach and the Information Project Managers in the IDS Knowledge Services.

likely to be in achieving the kinds of changes we want. It will also allow for a more meaningful evaluation.

Where possible IDS KS should plan future work using the theory of change to help guide their activity choices by laying out in more detail what they are aiming to achieve. Services should start at the vision and goal end of the theory of change and work backwards towards the product they are planning to produce to get a more outcomes focused view of the intervention. In addition using the activity areas to structure planned activities and outputs should allow more comparison and synergy between services.

What's the problem IDS KS are seeking to address?⁷

Before articulating what changes we are seeking to achieve we need to understand the problems that the IDS Knowledge Services have been designed to address.

Central to this is asking how actors involved in policymaking, programme decision-making and practice, as well as research, come to know and learn more about the issues involved, to define problems and formulate potential solutions. What are the problems in terms of information flows in these uncertain and complex policy contexts?

A core problem arises in how development actors 'make sense' of development realities in order to base decisions and actions. The problem is that processes of policy formulation and decision making are too often characterised by partial knowledge building based on a narrow evidence-base (Leach and Fairhead 1994; Chambers 1992 cited in Vogel and Fisher 2008). Possible causes of this include:

- Decision makers often may not have direct experience of poverty-related issues, and so must rely on indirect interpretations of reality, conveyed through statistics and indicators, as well as interactions through networks and other means.
- Decision-makers' professional formation and training gives them an established body of knowledge, a worldview and a position within professional networks, which can act as a disincentive to engage with new sources of evidence.
- Numerous pressures on those making decisions in development contexts (including political pressures, multiple demands and lack of time) help to keep them operating within their particular professional or disciplinary perspectives and oriented towards stakeholders, networks and strategies which are familiar and which have worked well in the past.
- Disciplinary, professional, network and geographical boundaries prevent development policymakers and practitioners from engaging with and sharing information beyond their immediate peers
- Dominant narratives and knowledge sources that narrow the base of available evidence in mainstream debates are created
- Power relations perpetuate within knowledge hierarchies that crowd out alternative perspectives from mainstream debates
- Organisational and professional cultures discourage information use and knowledge-sharing
- Capacity to search for, evaluate and apply research evidence and information is constrained by a lack of political space for manoeuvre and other factors such as restrictions on time, cost, skills, access to technology, language and technical jargon⁸.

There are also problems in information flows associated with the research sector. Research and researchers speak to members of their own discipline first, as it is from them that its verification,

⁷ This section is an edited section of the paper by Vogel and Fisher (2008)

⁸ Fisher and Kunaratnam 2007

quality and authority is drawn, and it needs to be 'translated' to make it more suited to the needs of other audiences. Problems stemming from this include:

- Research may not respond to the needs of policy makers or practitioners who may see it as irrelevant or answering the wrong questions, therefore they may not be willing and/or able to respond to recommendations
- Researchers might not be best placed in terms of skills, resources or motivation to communicate and 'translate' their findings effectively to audiences not specialist in their field
- Conversely, competition between research producers skilled at communication may lead to a bombardment of messages: 'evidence-based policy' becomes 'my evidence, your policy'.

In a policy context, while better links are important, too close a relationship or too exclusive a network of researchers and policymakers becomes problematic if they close off 'policy spaces' where there is room for manoeuvre and negotiation take place, thus perpetuating a narrow evidence-base. Problems flowing from this include:

- The 'integrity' of research is compromised and may lead to charges of 'policy-based evidence-making'
- Important actors might be left out of tight networks, for example when research is commissioned from consultants that are familiar and known, which could result in foreign consultants being favoured over in-country researchers

These are the some examples from the range of 'problems' that information and knowledge intermediaries aim to address through their work and unique position spanning boundaries between research, policy and practice. Of course, some development actors may not necessarily recognise these as 'problems', as this is an oversimplification of complex social and knowledge processes, but they still represent a substantial arena for multiple interventions that intermediaries such as the IDS KS might make.

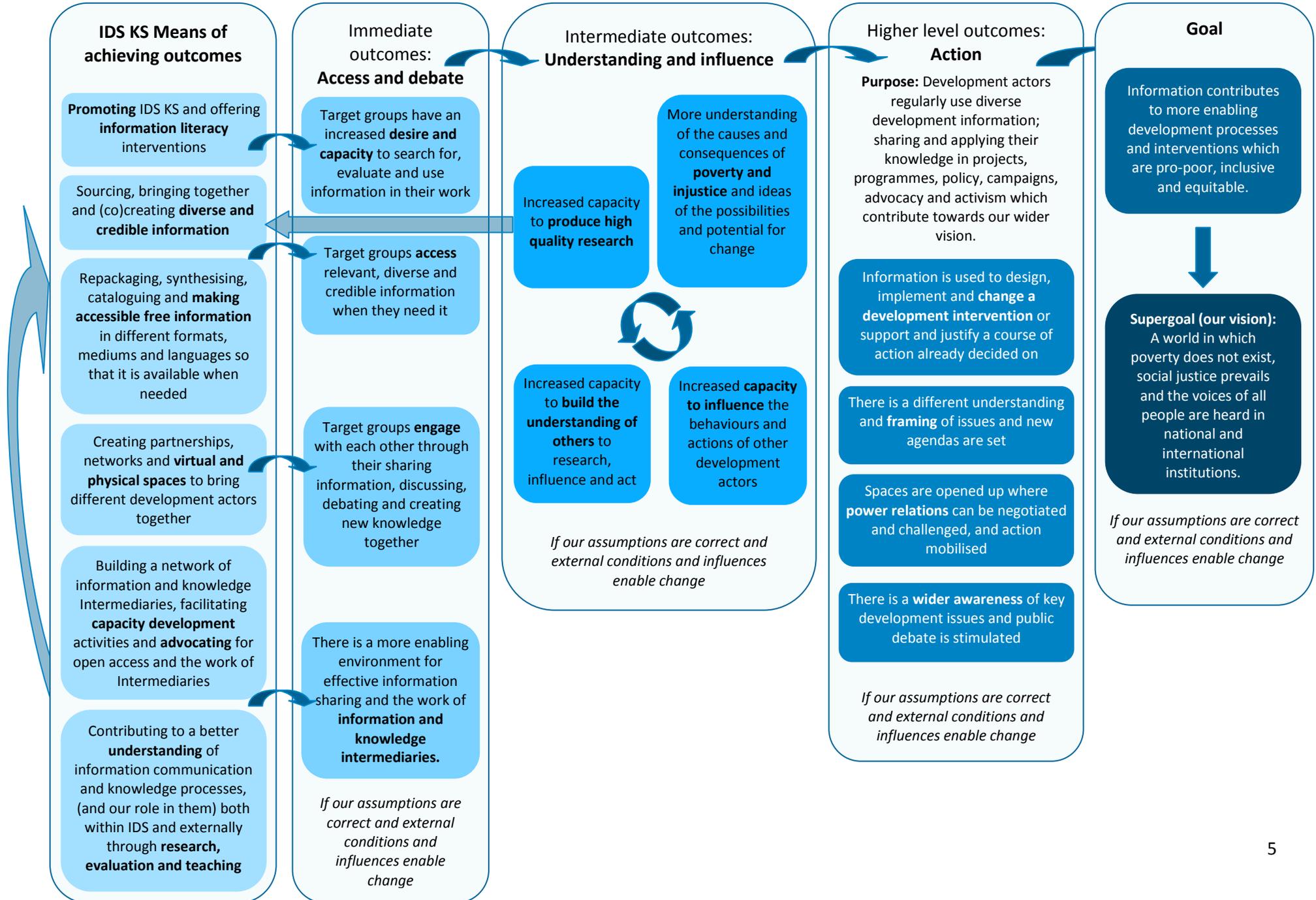
External factors and assumptions

As we have seen, IDS KS are intervening in a complex environment involving multiple social and knowledge processes. Our theory of change on its own is not a complete picture. Even if IDS KS produce all the planned outputs, change only happens if a number of other external conditions are in place. There are many other factors (political, social, cultural, bureaucratic, personal etc.) which influence whether information is used and the outcomes that result⁹. These are assumptions which are necessary conditions for the achievement of our intervention and risks/external factors which could affect our influence. Our assumptions are made explicit so that they can be explored further and our evidence and outcomes contextualised.

⁹ "Good information projects or processes may have no impact, or even a negative one, because other required inputs are absent... No specific factor, much less information, can be singled out as a main cause of development." Menou (1993)

From Access to Action: IDS Knowledge Services Information and Impact Pathways

Pathways of information flows



The IDS vision is a world in which poverty does not exist, social justice prevails and the voices of all people are heard in national and international institutions. Generating, mobilising and sharing knowledge, through research, teaching and communications, plays a key part in realising this vision. The IDS Information Department contributes to this through its work as an 'information and knowledge intermediary'. It hosts a 'family' of Knowledge Services that help research and other information to reach those who can use it to reduce poverty and injustice.

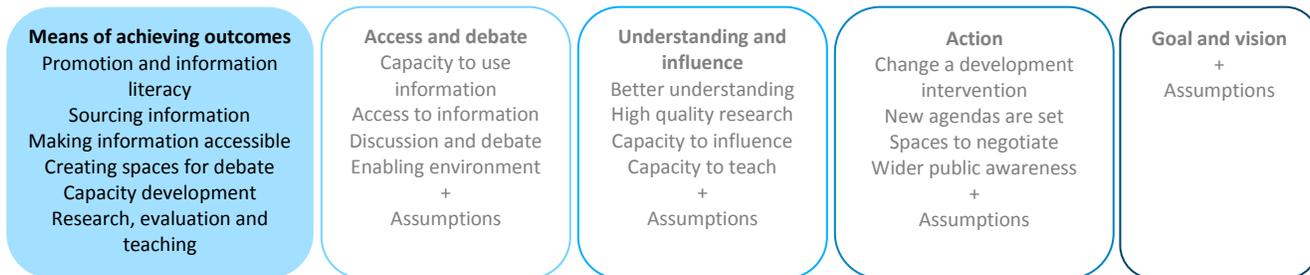
The IDS Information Department's mission is to help people to understand and make sense of the complexities and realities of poverty and inequality. We inform debate, advocacy, research and policy, and thereby stimulate action to bring about positive social change. By sharing information from diverse perspectives, we influence those in situations of power to make better-informed decisions and support those without power to have their voices heard.

Over the next five years, the IDS Information Department's strategic ambitions are:

- 0.1 **We will have adopted a much more decentralised and networked approach:** collaborating with others, particularly in the South, in sourcing and sharing information, and creating spaces to stimulate interaction and debate.
- 0.2 **We will be presenting a more diverse range of perspectives:** broadening debates on international development, and helping to amplify voices that are not being heard, especially those from the South.
- 0.3 **We will be doing more to encourage learning and action:** working with others to understand and champion the role of information in tackling poverty and injustice, strengthening the capacity of Southern information intermediaries and helping to address the power imbalances and capacity constraints that limit people's ability to access and make use of information.
- 0.4 **We will be closer to users and more engaged in debates:** so we understand information needs better and improve our services, target our efforts, increase our influence, and demonstrate impact better.
- 0.5 **We will be doing what we do well, but doing it better:** building on our trademark strengths in delivering trusted, high quality services, experimenting with new ways of delivering our objectives and doing more to reach out to new users.
- 0.6 **We will be more coherent and effective as a department:** strengthening structures and management systems so the services work together better, and so we are able to provide a productive and supportive environment for staff to work in.

These strategic ambitions outline how we will work more effectively to achieve our outcomes.

¹⁰ IDS Information Department Strategy 2008-2013 <http://www.ids.ac.uk/go/knowledge-services/about-ids-knowledge-services>



Means of achieving our outcomes: work areas for our activities

- 1.1 Promoting IDS KS and offering information literacy interventions
- 1.2 Sourcing, bringing together and (co)creating diverse and credible information.
- 1.3 Repackaging, synthesising, cataloguing and making accessible free information in different formats, mediums and languages¹¹ so that it is available when it is needed
- 1.4 Creating partnerships, networks and virtual and physical spaces to bring different development actors together

Creating an enabling environment: The following areas of work will improve our ability to deliver our other outputs. However they are also key outputs in themselves. Our goal is more likely to be reached by improving our own practice, and supporting and working with others who share our values and goals.

- 1.5 Building a network of information and knowledge intermediaries, facilitating capacity development activities and advocating for open access and the work of intermediaries
- 1.6 Contributing to a better understanding of information, communication and knowledge processes (and our role in them), both within IDS and externally through research, evaluation and teaching

Assumptions and external factors for our activities

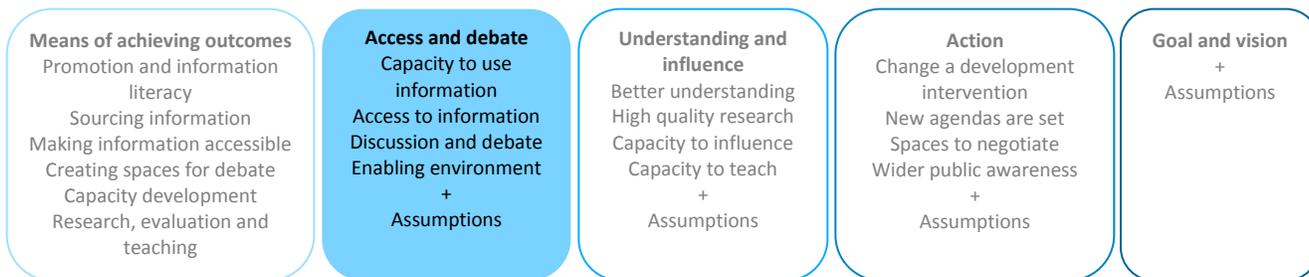
If...

- ... We can identify the most appropriate target groups and reach them with our services.
- ... Relevant, credible and diverse information is produced by both practitioners and researchers
- ... Information producers have the motivation and capacity to make information accessible to IDS KS
- ... IDS continues to be seen as a credible and trusted information intermediary
- ... Donors fund appropriate research programmes which respond to locally identified needs.

Other factors involved...

- ...In places/situations where research is censored or controlled IDS KS are less likely to be able to access it.
- ... Diversity is a complex concept; any single piece of information or perspectives is only one part of a picture and no single intermediary will ever be able to present all the information relevant to a debate. We always bring our own personal and professional choices and framing (and potentially biases) to the information presented. We must be explicit about our editorial processes which guide these choices.

¹¹ For more discussion of language issues and options for IDS Knowledge Services see Jolly, Young and Gernet (2006)



Immediate outcomes: Access and debate

2.1 Target groups¹² have an increased desire and capacity to search for, evaluate and use information in their work

- Target groups have the skills to search for, evaluate and use information¹³
- Target groups who did not previously search for information access a wider range of information sources
- Target groups access IDS Knowledge Services products

2.2 Target groups access relevant, diverse and credible information when they need it

- Target groups know where information is located and access information cheaply, quickly and easily
- Target groups access information from different perspectives, disciplines, networks, countries and regions
- Target groups access information packaged in ways which facilitate their learning and which they cannot get elsewhere
- Information producers, especially those from the South and the most marginalised, increase the reach and dissemination of their information
- Target groups share, and influence others to access, information through IDS KS

2.3 Target groups engage with each other through sharing their information, discussing, debating and creating new knowledge together

- Development actors share and engage with people beyond their current networks
- Spaces are created and used where discourses are challenged with alternative perspectives and where collaboration strengthens groups' capabilities and legitimacy to negotiate and initiate change

¹² For each product, IDS KS have a specific set of target groups they aim to reach. For more details see Brown (2008)

¹³ There are various definitions of information literacy but it can be seen as the ability to recognise when and why information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, use and communicate effectively the information in an ethical way within an iterative context of review and reflection. This definition is a combined one from the Chartered Institutes of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), the American Library Association and JISC.

2.4 There is a more enabling environment for effective information sharing and for the work of information and knowledge intermediaries.

Capacity development:

- The work of information and knowledge intermediaries is recognised, understood and valued in development contexts
- There are structures in place to support the work of information and knowledge intermediaries including networks and events, a common language and identity, identification of good practice, training

Advocacy for open access:

- Information in closed spaces is made accessible to more people (including open archiving by development research organisations through both long term changes and short term fixes)

Research, evaluation and teaching:

- There is a better understanding of information, communication and knowledge processes, both within IDS and externally. Specifically there is a better understanding of the influence of information and knowledge intermediaries on other development actors.
- There is more effective planning and implementation of information and knowledge intermediary work which is informed by learning and evidence
- There is an improved understanding of our target groups and contexts in which they work
- Development Studies students consider different approaches to mobilising knowledge for development through a teaching course

Assumptions and external factors for access and debate

If...

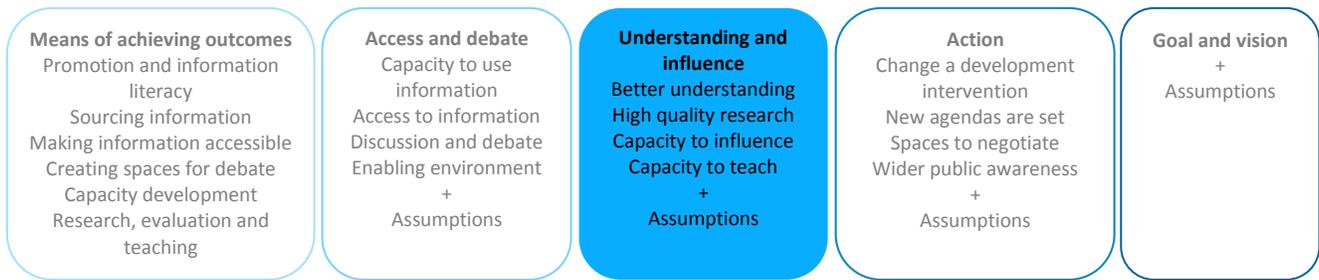
- ... Target groups have the agency and resources to access the information they require through one of our distribution systems (currently post, the internet, email or face to face events we attend/convene)
- ... Target groups have basic literacy skills and are able to read in the main languages we produce information in
- ... Information from other disciplines and different parts of the world is relevant and valued by our target groups¹⁴.
- ... Presenting a diverse range of viewpoints can improve the quality of analysis
- ... Target groups are aware that research often offers complex, nuanced and sometimes contradictory information and that any piece of information only offers a partial view of a situation. They are therefore able to make choices identify gaps in the information and can supplement their knowledge with other sources of information.
- ... Development actors have the time and desire to widen their networks and engage in debates, rather than just passively receiving information
- ... Development actors have the incentives and motivation to share and communicate the information they receive with others
- ... People are able to engage and build relationships with each other through online spaces
- ... There are other information and knowledge intermediaries with shared goals to IDS KS who are open to collaboration and change.
- ... Information and knowledge intermediaries are able to identify sufficient common ground between them.
- ... The hybrid nature of information and knowledge intermediary work encourages people to engage beyond their professional networks
- ... Information producers are open to lobbying and negotiation on information sharing and open access

Other factors involved...

- ... Seeking information competes with other higher priority activities for many people in policy, practice and advocacy roles. IDS KS has only a very limited influence on the extent to which our target groups have the motivation, incentives, time and resources to search for information and use the IDS KS.
- ... Our information literacy training cannot reach all our target groups. Therefore, without information literacy training, some of our target groups may have limited skills in being able to identify their information needs and search effectively for information.
- ... Information literacy does not necessarily follow from having IT skills and the ability to read. Critical analytical skills are also important for people to evaluate the contextual relevance of the range of different opinions presented.
- ... The written word sits alongside other forms of information and communication which may have a stronger influence on people's actions¹⁵.
- ... Most information and knowledge intermediaries are dependent upon the support of donors for their work. Whilst we can advocate and work with donors to increase understanding of the sector; political and resource pressures will affect the extent to which donors can respond.
- ... Efforts made by researchers in communicating their research to influence development actors

¹⁴ Court and Young (2003); Arunachalam (2003); Id21 (2005)

¹⁵ Ferguson (2007)



Intermediate outcomes: Understanding and influence

3.1 More understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty and injustice and ideas of the possibilities and potential for change

- Consider and include the voice, claims, needs, influence and impact of more stakeholders (especially the most marginalised) when planning a course of action
- Better analyse local needs, global trends, the latest debates, power dynamics and risk
- Have a better understanding of the complexity of reality and the range of factors, viewpoints and experiences which need to be considered
- Critically reflect on and question dominant or conventional narratives and discourses and engage with counter narratives which are based in alternatives perspectives and locally generated understandings
- Have tools with which to learn through doing
- Are more creative as a result of reflecting, researching, analysing and theorising

3.2 Increased capacity to build the understanding of others to influence and act

- Repackaging and communication of information in teaching, lecturing, training and workshops

3.3 Increased capacity to produce high quality research

- Researchers with fewer resources are able to access high quality research materials
- Research is produced which takes into account a broad range of information sources and perspectives
- There is less duplication of research as researchers are aware of what information is available.

3.4 Increased capacity to influence the behaviours and actions of other development actors

- Increased skills, legitimacy, confidence and authority to influence, negotiate, lobby, advocate and act as an agent of social change
- Information is used to gain access to those in situations of power
- Development actors have increased social capital and are part of more inclusive networks, alliances and relationships which are better able to challenge power relations

Assumptions and external factors for understanding and influence

If...

- ... People's assumptions, beliefs and views can change and information can contribute to changing them
- ... Other sources of information and knowledge are also available which help to build people's understanding- this includes local data, indigenous knowledge, the views of peers and colleagues and local dialogue¹⁶
- ... Target groups have the capacity to adapt and translate information for their own contexts¹⁷ and that the ways in which we select, present and package our information facilitates that process.
- ... People are able to co-create and debate information and knowledge and involvement in those processes increases ownership and facilitate better learning
- ... Teaching and training programmes and syllabuses are regularly updated
- ... Those being taught and trained later apply their learning in a development context
- ... Information plays a role in increasing the status of those using it, and that this can give people more influence, providing decision-making spaces are open to wider participation and influence
- ... Access to IDS KS information is wide enough so that it is not only the most powerful who can access information and thus further increase their status and inequality. This is especially a risk if access to information and IT is unequal¹⁸ (unless print publications, CD Roms and advocacy for IT connections are able to redress the balance)

Other factors involved...

- ... A person's background, education, politics, religion, experience and networks will strongly influence understandings of poverty and ideas of how to tackle it.
- ... As information becomes knowledge it is interpreted within different people's social and political circumstances which result in multiple views of the world and interpretations of information¹⁹; "Knowledge is engaged, value bound and context determined"²⁰. Therefore information may be interpreted in a way that is different to its author's original intention
- ... People may look for information which supports their pre-existing views, rather than challenging them
- ... In some contexts information produced by the most marginalised may be perceived as of less value. Some professional values, stereotypes and received wisdom may mean that more value is placed on dominant and powerful perspectives.
- ... Social, cultural and political dynamics can restrict the influence that development actors can have in different spheres
- ... Our own values influence the types of information we communicate, and the ways in which we frame it. Whilst IDS KS endeavour to present a balanced picture, incorporating a diversity of views; this will still be shaped by the values, background and experiences of our editorial teams

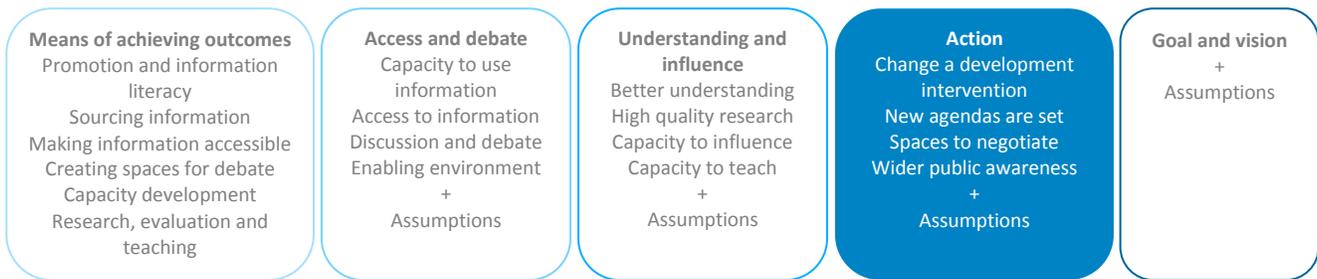
¹⁶ Id21 (2005); IDS Information Department (2007); Ferguson (2007)

¹⁷ Mansell (2002); IDS Information Department (2007)

¹⁸ Crewe and Young (2002); Mansell (2002); Hovland (2003); IDS Information Department (2007)

¹⁹ "Sense making takes place in the context of social relations. Knowledge is therefore a part of society rather than independent from it." Powell (2006)

²⁰ Wolfe (2006)



Higher level outcomes: **Actions**

4. Purpose: Development actors regularly use diverse development information; sharing and applying their knowledge in projects, programmes, policy, campaigns, advocacy and activism which contribute towards our wider vision.

4.1 Information is used to design, implement and change a development intervention or support and justify a course of action already decided on²¹

- Development actors have ideas, strategies and frameworks to plan development interventions which are more inclusive, equitable, enabling and take into account marginalised perspectives.
- Information sources are quoted or referenced in reports, plans and proposals to give a course of action more legitimacy and authority
- Development actors have more confidence in their chosen course of action

4.2 There is a different understanding and framing of issues, and new agendas are set

- A recognition of new issues in development processes
- A change in the frame in which groups and organisations define their interests and come together to lobby for change

4.3 Spaces are opened up where power relations can be negotiated and challenged, and action mobilised

- Development actors invite and accept new groups of stakeholders (especially the most marginalised) into decision-making spaces
- Development actors are able to create their own spaces for debate and action and can access other spaces from which they have previously been excluded.

4.4 There is a wider awareness of key development issues and public debate is stimulated

- Repackaging and presentation of information in the mass media

²¹ The first three outcomes here are based on Weiss' different ways of looking at use of knowledge in policy as outlined in Pestieau (2003). The other outcomes incorporate ideas from Wheeler's (2007) paper which describe different types of research including: research as finding out (to create new or better evidence-based policy); research as activism (for social mobilisation and increased awareness) and research as developing theory (for new/different discourses of development).

Assumptions and external factors for actions

If...

- ... Through a variety of different channels, information and the learning it builds can reach those in situations of power²².
- ... Information resonates with the user's existing assumptions (or enough pressure is exerted to challenge them)²³
- ... Development actors are able to create or seize windows of opportunity for change
- ... Development actors have incentives and motivations to change their current practice²⁴
- ... Use of information to support or justify a course of action already decided on can add value to development processes and gives development actors increased capacity to act. It is important for IDS KS to be aware that there is a risk that information could be used to justify, reinforce and rationalise irrational, flawed or excluding decisions.
- ... Different sources of information are presented in ways which give people a nuanced, balanced perspective which builds their understanding of marginalisation and power inequalities. In the same way that information could be used to justify poor decisions, there is a risk that IDS KS could also be used to justify and perpetuate power inequalities²⁵.
- ... Information is used by journalists and others working in the media to build awareness and stimulate public debate

Other factors involved...

- ... Policies and programmes are not created by a single development actor through simplistic, rational, explicit processes and choices²⁶ based on a small number of identifiable sources of information. Policy formulation for example is a complex process and no single actor can claim to have had the deciding influence, whether or not they had good development information at their disposal²⁷.
- ... Politics, bureaucracy, time pressures, resources, individual and organisational capacity²⁸ influence a person's actions and decisions
- ... People rarely drastically change their views and plans on the basis of receiving a single piece of information, and the kinds of changes to development interventions and processes we can expect to see are more likely to be fairly small, incremental or only visible in the long term (perhaps years after the information was accessed)
- ... Power relations are complex and mediated by a vast range of factors. Information is only one small factor that has the potential to challenge existing power relations
- ... Situations where there is media censorship and no political freedom to raise and discuss controversial issues²⁹ will limit the influence of information

²² Menou (1993); Crewe and Young (2002)

²³ Knowledge, Society and Technology Team (2006)

²⁴ Menou (1993); Hovland (2003)

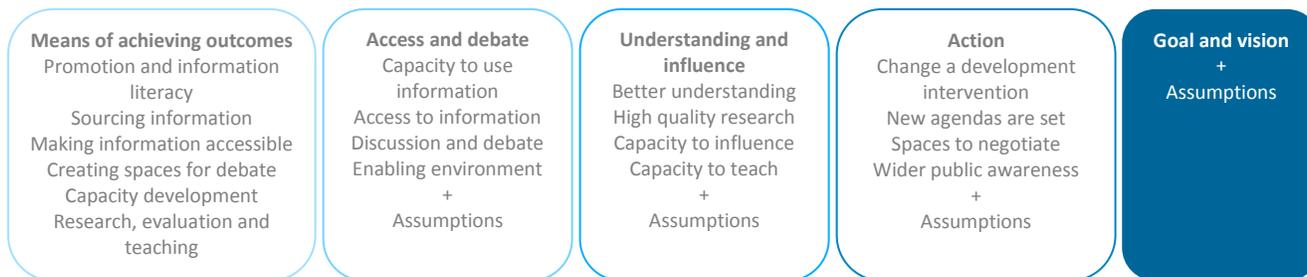
²⁵ Court and Young (2003)

²⁶ Menou (1993)

²⁷ Barr and Haylor (2007)

²⁸ Hovland (2003); Coe, Luetchford and Kingham (2002); Crewe and Young (2002)

²⁹ Id21 (2005)



Our goal: Information contributes to more enabling development processes and interventions which are pro-poor, inclusive and equitable.

Our vision: A world in which poverty does not exist, social justice prevails and the voices of all people are heard in national and international institutions.

Assumptions and external factors for our goal and vision

If...

- ... Information can help to build understandings of poverty and injustice and thus allow development actors to better predict the consequences of their actions³⁰
- ... This information use results in more appropriate and successful interventions³¹
- ... Planned development interventions and processes can reduce poverty and social injustice

Other factors involved...

... As well as events and processes outside of planned development interventions such as economics, politics, conflict and disasters there are multiple factors which influence change and mediate the influence of information in development processes and interventions. These include:

- Political and economic processes, environments and ideologies³² including policy agendas and narratives³³
- The capacity of the system to ensure that changes in policy are translated into implementation³⁴
- Politics happening at other levels (eg international, national or local)
- Donor agendas and pressure to spend quickly
- Social influence, hierarchy and power relationships³⁵ including power dynamics³⁶ both within and external to the organisation
- Vested interests which could gain or lose out from proposed changes³⁷
- Bureaucratic inertia preventing change³⁸
- Inspired leadership (or lack of it)³⁹
- Chance / serendipity and windows of opportunity

³⁰ Thorngate in McConnell (1995)

³¹ Menou (1993); Hovland (2003)

³² Court and Young (2003)

³³ Ferguson (2007); Coe, Luetchford and Kingham (2002)

³⁴ Crewe and Young (2002)

³⁵ Hovland (2003)

³⁶ Knowledge, Society and Technology Team (2006); Sutton (1999)

³⁷ Court and Young (2003); Sutton (1999)

³⁸ Sutton (1999)

³⁹ Sutton (1999)

Glossary of terms used

[unless otherwise referenced, these definitions are taken from the paper by Vogel et al.⁴⁰]

Communication refers to a process of information exchange and interaction between individuals using common symbols, signs or behaviour to express and elicit meaning. It is a process of building social understanding which can be shaped, mediated, and blocked by power relations, social practices, norms, institutions and other contextual factors (Foucault 1970; Habermas 1996). References cited in Vogel et al (2007).

Development actors: are the individuals who make up groups, collective movements, organisations and institutions who work to bring about change⁴¹. In our context this would include people working on, or trying to influence, development projects, programmes, policy, campaigns, advocacy and activism which contribute towards our wider vision.

Framing: Refers to the shaping of assumptions that ‘frame’ a discipline, theory or debate; affecting the way issues or events are perceived, interpreted and discussed⁴².

Information is the codified expression of different types of knowledge. It is analysed data, codified and ‘formatted’ for different purposes. It draws on social and political frameworks of shared meanings embedded in its context, and so is open to interpretation by different actors (Davies 1994; Baumann 1999 cited in Vogel et al (2007)).

Intermediary refers to an individual, organisation or network that generates, interprets, organises, structures, communicates or disseminates codified information for a particular purpose to particular social groups (Vogel et al 2007).

Information intermediaries are primarily concerned with the accessibility, structuring, and packaging of information.

Knowledge intermediaries are additionally concerned with interacting with their stakeholder groups to engage in the interpretation of information and to use it to co-create new knowledge.

Knowledge refers to human understandings shaped by cognitive processes and the social interactions between individuals. Knowledge entails human ‘knowers’ and is dynamically constructed and reconstructed through cognitive processes (reflection, awareness, thinking, learning), social interactions, and political circumstances. It is therefore subjective, ‘engaged, value bound and context determined’ (Scoones and Thompson 1993 cited in Vogel et al (2007)). Sources of knowledge include research, statistics, cultural knowledge, experience and beliefs.

Learning is a process (intimately related to knowledge) of change in how we understand and interpret the reality around us. It is a process that is linked to a change of practice and is not purely an intellectual phenomenon (Gmelin, King and McGrath 2001). Learning does not necessarily result from teaching, but can occur through many channels such as experience, dialogue, reflection or revelation (Wohelgemuth 2001). References cited in Vogel et al (2007).

⁴⁰ Vogel, Wendt and Wolfe (2007)

⁴¹ Based on a definition of social change agents in Taylor, Deak, Petti and Vogel (2006)

⁴² Definition by Marion Clark, IDS Information Department

Research and research logic refers to any systematic learning process resulting in a codified output (Crewe and Young 2002). We view research as a social process of knowledge construction rather than knowledge 'discovery'; as such it is subjective, value-based, and structured by norms and institutions. References cited in Vogel et al (2007).

Outcome: Changes in the behaviour, relationships, activities and/or actions of our target groups that can be logically linked to our programme (although they are not necessarily directly and solely caused by it)⁴³. Outcomes are changes we would like to see in other people, and are thus not entirely within our control. We have broadly divided our theory of change into immediate, intermediate and longer term outcomes. Our intermediate outcomes around understanding and influence sit between access to information and the end use of that information. It is about both the understanding and knowledge that results from engaging with information, and the influence that the kinds of information we promote can bring. Higher level outcomes are the changes in behaviours of development actors in which we hope to see information influence development processes and interventions.

We will be developing **indicators** for each outcome. These will use the outcome mapping concept of changes we expect to see, would like to see, and would love to see. As far as possible we will work towards each service having the same indicators, although there will be some service specific indicators.

Outputs: The deliverables of our work. These are the products we put out as a result of our inputs and resources. Outputs are the results of our activities, that people and organisations outside the programme can use e.g workshops, websites, publications, trainings, conferences etc.⁴⁴

Vision: The large scale development changes (economic, political social and environmental) to which IDS KS hopes to contribute⁴⁵. IDS KS will only have a small contribution to these long term outcomes as they relate to large-scale development changes; however they are the driving force for our work and set out what change we want to see in the world.

⁴³ Earl, Carden and Smutylo (2001)

⁴⁴ Davies (page accessed 27th May 2008)

⁴⁵ Earl, Carden and Smutylo (2001)

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